THEOSOPHY AND ETHICS.

BY

E. T. STURDY, F.T.S.

LONDON:
THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY,
7, DUKE STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.
THE PATH, 132 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK, U.S.A.
THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA.
1891.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

BOOKS FOR GENERAL ENQUIRERS.

Students are advised to read the books in the following order:

	s.	d.
Echoes from the Orient. William Q. Judge	2	6
The Key to Theosophy. H. P. Blavatsky	6	0
Esoteric Buddhism. A. P. Sinnett	4	0
Reincarnation. E. D. Walker	3	6

FOR MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS.

Isis Unveiled. H. P. Blavatsky	42	0
The Secret Doctrine. H. P. Blavatsky	42	0

ETHICAL.

The Voice of the Silence. Trans. by H. P. Blavatsky	2	6
The Bhagavad Gîtâ. (American Edition.)	4	6
The Light of Asia. Sir Edwin Arnold	3	6

PAMPHLETS.

Light from the East. (Speeches on Theosophy)	0	6
Wilkesbarre Letters on Theosophy. A. Fullerton	0	6
H. P. B.: In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, by Some of Her Pupils	1	0
Epitome of Theosophical Teachings. William Q. Judge	0	3
The Higher Science. W. Kingsland	0	2
Theosophy and Its Evidences. Annie Besant	0	3
Why I Became a Theosophist. Annie Besant	0	4
The Theosophical Society and H. P. B. Annie Besant and H. T. Patterson	0	3
Short Glossary of Theosophical Terms. Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows	0	1

LUCIFER,

A Monthly Magazine of

Theosophy and the Occult Sciences.

(Founded by H. P. BLAVATSKY.)

EDITOR, ANNIE BESANT. SUB-EDITOR, G. R. S. MEAD.

Subscription, 17*s.* 6*d.* per annum. Single Copy, 1*s.* 6*d.*

The above works can all be obtained at the offices of the Theosophical Publishing Society, 7, Duke Street, Adelphi, W.C.

In America they are sold at the *Path* Office, 132 Nassau Street, New York City.

In India, at the Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar, Madras.

Theosophy and Ethics.

IN his search after a rule of life, man's first necessity would seem to be an ethical code by which to think and act; yet as soon as he sets himself to formulate this code, he finds that ethics cannot stand alone, but must be correlated with metaphysics and science.

Metaphysics, science and ethics, then, stand to the student of Theosophy as an inseparable trinity; metaphysics must be scientific and ethical; science must be metaphysical and ethical; ethics must be metaphysical and scientific. These three factors must be in harmony; where they clash there is some false conclusion in one or more of them. The head and the heart, intellect and aspiration, must not contradict each other; for if they do, either the reasoning is false, or the aspiration futile.

Starting, then, from this wide basis, all the events of life have a threefold significance. We learn some scientific fact, and if we are sufficiently intuitive, its interest may be intensified for us by its conveying a moral lesson also, and thus becoming a guide in the attitude we should strive to maintain towards our fellow men and the whole of nature. An ethical rule founded upon such conclusions as these, although it may have limitations, does not err within these limitations, unless indeed reasoning and observation are perverted in all three cases. A code founded upon dogma, since it must be accepted blindly by its follower, is out of harmony and does not satisfy the two other requirements of his nature, *viz.* metaphysics and science.

If we diligently maintain this position, we eliminate, to a very large extent, the liability to error: we must constantly check our knowledge and our aspirations in all three departments. Sometimes the heart rebels and would coerce intelligence; more often the senses, misinterpreting the data given them, would overthrow both the head and heart. But head, heart and senses must learn

to walk hand in hand, and be in perfect harmony and equilibrium.

Since ethics form our subject, in attempting to lay down ethical rules, we may just as aptly start from ethical as from metaphysical or scientific statements, so long as we are prepared to support the former by the latter. When therefore we say, for instance, "Serve thy neighbour as thy very self," we are prepared to endorse this with all the conclusions we draw from our metaphysics and our science. And since to say, "All men are myself," would create a confusion on this plane of limitation and separateness, we say here, "All men are brethren," *i.e.*, they are one in origin, and one in essence.

We are putting forth no new idea; rather is it the new idea to draw arbitrary lines and shut up different "departments" of knowledge in water-tight compartments. Knowledge is one. In the East for thousands of years, as far back as record or tradition will carry us, even up to the present day, we find no distinction arbitrarily drawn between metaphysics, science and ethics: they are treated "religiously." A Brahman will discuss with you from the scientific standpoint the deepest problems of his religion. If you have his confidence, he will unfold to you the *scientific* reasons he has for his ethics.

Our Western science, boring away into a groove of its own and ignoring other knowledge, has limited itself, nor can it understand science as blended with metaphysics and morality as it is pursued in the East.

Our Western religion, fighting for centuries against science, and severely shattered by it, cannot understand the religious thought of the East.

But the inevitable result of this antagonism is at hand, for a mutual destruction of all that is contradictory in our science and religion is proceeding apace. It will not end until the two are amalgamated; it will not cease until the offices of our priests and scientists have become one, and from their union, with a good deal added, the teacher of the future, theologian, moral expositor and scientist of a new type, will arise. It is at this critical period when science and theology alike fail to satisfy man's cravings, that Theosophy has sprung once more into manifestation in the West it has come into *manifestation* again, it has not been reborn, for there is no century throughout the Christian era when it did not live in the hearts of the few, and further East is its true home where it has always been in evidence for those whose time had come to receive it.

To the student of Theosophy his researches bring a vast illumination to bear upon the ethical codes of all the great religions of the world.

Pursuing science in connection with metaphysics and ethics, constantly welding these into the homogeneous whole of knowledge, which stands for him as his total of experience of life, constantly trying and chastening this knowledge by deep analysis of his own mind, thus casting out all bias, until in what he knows there is no flaw, he proceeds to ever deeper and deeper problems; and always by conforming in thought, word and act with what he, so far, understands. Standing thus to some extent untrammelled, he may study those profound problems, Karma and Reïncarnation. Whilst he has not freed his mind from prejudice, whilst he has not felt the limitations and selfishness of his personality, he may take a general view of these conceptions, but he cannot seek deep into them and understand in all their scientific and moral bearings doctrines which treat the personality honestly at its true worth and rise to questions far beyond it.

Therefore fulfil what you know; harmonize what you have of knowledge in metaphysics, science and morals; cast out what you find does not harmonize, and start on this small stock of knowledge as your foundation. Use many "working hypotheses;" they are the ladders and scaffold of your building, but work nothing into your edifice that may have to come out again, if you can help it.

A great Indian sage has said:

"One who, having passed through the said preliminaries, desires *knowledge* for final absorption, must set himself seriously *to think*."

Knowledge is not produced by any means other than right *thinking;* just as objects are never perceived but by the help of light.

In another Eastern book it is said: "What a man thinks, that he inevitably becomes; this is the old secret." The Jewish scriptures and the teachings of Jesus bear evidence to the same fact.

Now, proceeding by the methods herein advocated, a Theosophist can take these statements as a *theorem* and utilizing his researches can trace in the three departments the truth of them, and each will support and blend with the other.

Thoughts are *things* upon their own plane, and *Eastern* science knows this. Man is the producer of thoughts, therefore of things; he is bound to what he produces and is answerable for the good or ill caused by his productions, first on the plane of thought, then through speech, and lastly by action. A man may sit at home and feel satisfied with himself that he has done no harm; but he thought angrily of his neighbour, and sent forth from himself, formed of his own substance, a winged thing to go out and work evil; that evil form which he has produced and imbued with life

continues in existence and is part of himself, and must inevitably return and build itself into him, somewhen, unless he recalls it and destroys it by its opposite, So thought follows thought, and these, both good and evil, clothe themselves in us, and take shape as body, moulding our features, and selecting our surroundings, which we are bound to accept and suffer or enjoy in, as our thoughts were evil or good. So I read Eastern science and ethics.

Understanding thus, the field of our responsibility is enormously increased; thought is immeasurably more far-reaching than word or deed. The greatest originators of misery and evil, to themselves and to others, may never appear in the world as anything beyond quite insignificant beings; yet the thoughts emanating from them may be intense and virulent, and scattering over the world like the spores of a disease may settle in the minds of weak, unguarded or naturally receptive people. Vast as is the mischief caused by an ambitious soldier, bringing death, disease and misery to hundreds of thousands, yet he may withal be generous, open-handed and forgiving: his evil activities are *mostly* on the most limited plane of all—the material—and he may rank far behind some unknown, undreamed-of demon in human shape who revenges himself in thought, hates and envies with an active mind, through most of his waking consciousness.

And so too the reverse of all this stands. The most far-extending benefits the human race receives may come from those who are unseen and little heard of, beings whose quiet lives are spent in benevolent thought, and the consequent production of thought-forms of purity and right aspiration, which floating over the world like crystal vases filled with light, may settle wherever they find reception, driving out the spores of evil and giving rise to hope and aspiration, and the perception of possibilities never seen before And this production of thought-forms, either good or bad, goes on unconsciously with the mass of mankind, but consciously with the few.

It must not be concluded from this that seclusion, silence and external inactivity are advocated; very far from it. The man who is starving is not saved by your wishing he had bread, but by your making your wish intention, and your intention accomplished act. Good will must be accompanied by good activities. otherwise it becomes a mere philosophical abstraction, and with much time spent in pondering over good theories we may remain in actuality intensely selfish. "*The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.*"

With the conception of this expansion of responsibility comes the ethical necessity of controlling the thoughts, emotions and passions. With the control and right direction of the mind, sel-

fishness, diminishes, and the personality dwindles to its right proportions. But consiousness does not dwindle, it increases immeasurably ; it is expanded over thousands unseen and unknown to the personality, but seen and known as minds by the sovereign indwelling mind upon its own plane ; devoid of names, devoid of forms as we understand these, but nevertheless *beings*, a' beings immeasurably superior to the forms they inhabit. Thought-forms can only proceed from corresponding activities on the plane of thought, and consequently from actors on that plane. They cannot be originated there by the physical brain, which is only the register of what takes place there.

Reasoning thus, we learn that there are sources of evil which man must cut off. He must crush all evil productions within himself, and he must be proof against those coming from without. By sterilizing the soil within himself he leaves nothing in which evil from without can strike root. This is only done by long effort, by abstraction from evil trains of thought and concentration upon good ones. The higher at length kills the lower ; they cannot flourish on the same soil. And this effort needs method, perseverance and courage. Day following day, year by year, the effort tells and transforms the very mind of the man ; thoughts and temptations which were dangers to him no longer trouble ; they seem no longer to exist for him. And so by analogy he knows that he will continue to conquer as long as he makes effort. We find how easily we acquire some slack habit or way of thinking ; it is because we follow our *desires ;* equally we may acquire good habits and the power of right thinking by following our *fixed will*, once we have centred it on its proper object. Will and desire are the divine and infernal manifestations of the same force.

Men sacrifice time, youth and strength, love, society and friendship, to the satisfying of their ambition, greed or vanity, and the world looks on and says nothing ; but when these things are renounced for the pursuit of truth, then there is an outcry of inhumanity, selfishness and the like. The world legitimatizes the former, but she loves not the latter. Her very foundations are laid in sensualism and strife, but truth is the mighty solvent which at length dissipates all this. Hence in both Buddhism and Christianity the earth is described as quaking when their respective founders made their greatest conquests.

To every man some especial thing has the highest value, and for that he makes his supreme sacrifice ; it may be little or great, according to his character and will. To the true Theosophist Wisdom is the jewel valuable beyond all other possessions, and for it he makes his supreme sacrifices in life. But the measure of his sacrifice is the precise measure of the price he is willing to pay

for Wisdom. He himself is the price, and he offers himself up little by little as his will and his estimate of the value of truth serve him. The altar upon which he sacrifices himself is the World, for the good of the world and for the satisfaction of his expanding consciousness, which ignoring the selfish conditions of the personality passes beyond this and lives by higher laws of its own.

It will be seen that from the Theosophical standpoint it is impossible to treat of ethics alone, and that the *New Testament*, the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* or any other book of moral teachings cannot be learnt and understood properly without the gaining of other knowledge also. Ignorance must be removed if wisdom is to be gained.

E. T. STURDY, F.T.S.

[*The Theosophical Society is not responsible for the individual opinions of its members.*]

The objects of the Theosophical Society are:

FIRST.—*To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*

SECOND.—*To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religious, philosophies and sciences, and demonstrate the importance of that study.*

THIRD.—*To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychic powers latent in man.*

Full information can be obtained from the General Secretary, 17 and 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

Printed on the H. P. B. Press.